Sum. 98

Historical Society of Palm Desert

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SPRING LUNCHEON AT SHADOW MOUNTAIN CLUB
Behind the Scenes of COD's Development with Martin McKell

President Jean Hollenbeck and Luncheon hostess, Mary Safe, welcomed the group and made opening remarks prior to the program. Pres. Hollenbeck: 1) Thanked Mary for the luncheon arrangements.

2) Introduced and congratulated Dolly Olesen as the newest Life Member, and thanked her for her recent generous gift, earmarked for preservation.
3) Gave results of the recent mail ballot, a strong response in favor of the slate as listed on the ballot. She introduced those present and announced that the installation of newly elected officers and board members will take place at the Annual Meeting on October 28 (a date to note.)

Richard Kelly made a presentation to the Society of the first survey made in 1966 of the economic feasibility of incorporation for Palm Desert. He had received it from Norm King who conducted the study. President Hollenbeck accepted with thanks for the archives of the Society.

Then it was "back to the future" with Martin "Marty" McKell who addressed the fifty or so members and guests. His comments, both wise and witty, helped in understanding the firm foundation for educational excellence which was laid down at College of the Desert in the decades from the fifties to the eighties. Marty had a significant role in the development of COD and in the growth of the City. He and his wife, Willa Ruth, two sons and a daughter became active in the community soon after their arrival in 1965.

As far back as 1946, people from Palm Springs and Coachella Valley High Schools thought a Jr. College would be appropriate for the area and studies were begun by the State Board of Education. Construction began in 1958 and in 1962 the college opened. A Palm Springs student won the name contest to call it "College of the Desert." Dr. Roy McCall was the first president of the college. He and his wife, Velma, a "marvelous couple" said McKell, established residence at the old O'Dell Ranch site (now the Velma Dawson House with offices of the Foundation, the Foundation Auxiliary, the Alumni Association, the Public Information office and a board room used by the Friends of the Library and other groups.) The ranch had been purchased at a cost of $605,000.

When classes began the sidewalks were sand and airplanes "buzzed" overhead, a conflict which was resolved when the aggrieved party became a good friend of the college. The first graduating class consisted of three students. They simply walked into the board room, picked up their certificates and said "Goodbye."

Three years after the college opened, enter Marty McKell, who had retired from the Navy after 21 years with the rank of Lieutenant Commander and was starting a second career in education. After one year in Gunnison, Colorado he brought his family to California. Marty interviewed with Dr. McCall for a position at COD and was hired, Marty believes, because of his navy experience and because of their demonstrated family ethic of community service.

COD had been called the Stanford of Jr. Colleges because of the preponderance of Ph. D.'s on the faculty. Marty replaced a teacher with a doctorate. Dr. McCall determined that a Business Department was needed and that Marty was the man to head it. At first the department consisted only of Marty and one stenographer. Shortly, another was added and for several years it was a 3-person operation. Marty immediately set about the task of building morale in his realm of responsibility by expediting registration procedures, creating workshops and seminars; "whatever the people wanted", and considerable progress was made.

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Marty was directed to draft a schematic for a Business Building. When he submitted the plans, Dr. McCall approved them but said, "Take out the restrooms." Architects had determined that there were a sufficient number of restrooms on campus for the student population. Marty tried again, returning some time later with minor changes and the restrooms still in place. "Take out the restrooms," decreed McCall. The building was completed in 1969 and to this day it has no restrooms. Enrollment is presently over 10,000.

Then came the legislation that rendered the money situation even more restrictive. Many aspects of local control shifted to the state. To meet needs for instructors, books and buildings the college forged ahead with ingenuity and determination. Marty formed a Business Club and many avenues for funding were pursued. In 1976 COD was in competition, nationally, for free ads offered in TIME magazine. A great deal of effort went into drafting and illustrating the ads, listing activities, sending packets of sweat shirts, notebooks and other items bearing the college logo. There was jubilation when COD won the contest. The net received from an entire year of the ads was $43.26! Ads in Palm Springs Life and information sheets incorporating some of these appeals were sent to valley organizations with similar unspectacular results. Nevertheless, the college could say it had been featured in TIME and LIFE.

Volunteer lecturers were recruited. Students in the Business Dept. heard from some people with impressive backgrounds, like the man from El Dorado who had been adviser to three U.S. presidents, for 33 years CEO of Procter & Gamble. He was a great speaker and Marty would send some of his best students for informal sessions with this man. Quality time with him, Marty figured, was better than hours in the classroom. Another person who signed up to lecture on principles of investment turned out to be a con artist. Newspaper accounts revealed he was wanted for fraud. Dr. McCall calmed Marty by reminding him that our system of jurisprudence holds that an individual is innocent until proven guilty. You'll have to ask Marty for the end of that story. On balance, much volunteer time was given and proved helpful. McKell also taught half-hour classes on T.V., covering Business Law, Law for the Layman and other subjects and often had guest presenters on to assist.

There were some amusing incidents of crossed phone and mail messages because of the similarity in names.....McCall and McKell. "Change your name, McKell," the good doctor would say. "I can't answer all your messages."

In his talk to our Society, Marty was generous in his praise of other departments at the college. He recalled fascinating bits of history -- COD once had a fencing team led by the late Dr. Roy Hudson. There are plants and trees on campus representing six continents, and there is still a producing date garden. Outstanding work is being done in the various departments: athletics, music, foreign languages, nursing, the Energy Task Force studying alternative fuels and in many other fields. He cited the beautiful Hilb Student Center and the child care facilities as great advances.

Marty was active in Rotary, as he is still, having recently helped the Palm Desert Club to celebrate its 50th anniversary. He served two terms on the board of directors of Desert Hospital. Also, he helped with surveys which culminated in bringing KPLM and KMIR to the valley.

In 1985 Marty retired from COD. He had left no stone unturned to meet COD's three purposes -- to prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges, to provide vocational training and additional education for students seeking jobs that don't require four years of college, and to serve individuals taking classes for self-improvement or in pursuit of a special interest. At retirement McKell had headed the Business Department at COD for 21 years.....it had grown from 3 to 38 people, offering 91 courses.

We hope to hear more from the McKells, a dear and talented couple. Marty and Willa Ruth headed the People-to-People program, taking young people overseas for seven straight years and directing the program for many years after that. Thanks for a wonderful life of accomplishment and for sharing some of it with the Historical Society.

Events like the luncheon afford a wonderful opportunity to visit with long time supporters and to greet newer members. We're glad Max Dollard joined us for lunch.

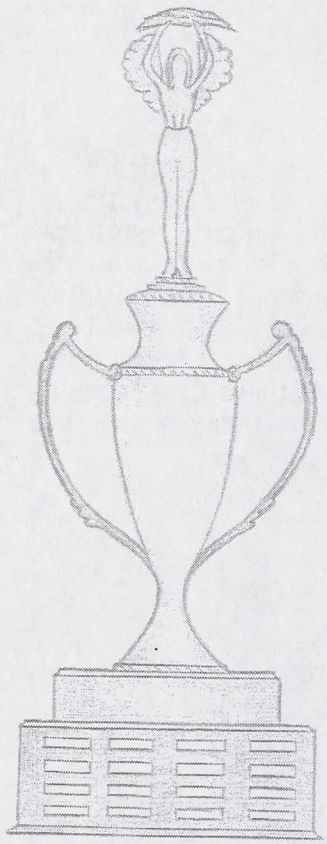
IN MEMORIAM: Edward F Pearson, 1905-1988

Another Coachella Valley pioneer gone. We will miss "Ted" very much.

VISITING A NEIGHBOR

Mary Safe arranged a March tour for interested board members of our Society to visit the La Quinta Historical Society and Museum. Barbara Irwin, Volunteer Director, very ably conducted the tour which proved to be an informative treat. Attractive exhibits are colorfully displayed throughout. The Director says, "I try to promote unity in the community through its history." They are open Thursday-Saturday each week; the phone number is 564-1283.

MAY RECOGNITIONS BLOOM LIKE FLOWERS IN SPRING



The 1998 annual Founder's Day Award was presented to Dick Kelly, long time City Councilman, three times Mayor of the City of Palm Desert. Marian Henderson, widow of Clifford Henderson - Palm Desert's founder, awarded a plaque and listing on the perpetual trophy. The award has been given each year since 1985. Dick's name brings to fourteen the number of honorees whose names are inscribed on the base of the handsome trophy.

About forty Society members, city personnel and friends gathered to honor Dick at the Portola Community Center. Rheo Lawman, the 1997 honoree, presided at the guest book and refreshments were served.

An easel display which Bonnie Bowie, Jan Holmlund and Ginny Folkers assembled depicted high points from some of the events in Dick's career. He was pictured at city functions; with a Sun Line bus, indicating the strides made in the use of alternative fuels which Dick has promoted so effectively; also, at Desert Willow golf course; and with children at Mini-Muster. One photo of several men dancing in can-can attire for United Way proved what we all know, he's a good sport and will go all out for a worthy cause!

In his gracious acceptance remarks -- oh, that Irish charm! -- he dropped a number of historical gems, sample, recalling that in 1946 he had come down to the desert from Monrovia with a crew to lay telephone wires on Wonder Palms. "Who remembers Wonder Palms?" he asked with a twinkle. It is now Frank Sinatra Drive.

Dick has been prominent in efforts to meet regional transportation needs and has served for 16 years on the Sun Line Transit Board. Long may you labor on our behalf, Dick, and garner more awards along the way!

CARING FOR THE DESERT: Past - Present - Future

Santa Rosa Mountains National Scenic Area Visitors Center on Hwy. 74 was the place, May 16 the date, for an outdoor program which recognized the contributions of Randall Henderson, Pete Dangermond and the City of Palm Desert. The introduction was by Buford Crites, the concluding remarks by Ted Lennon.

Past - Dedication of a Memorial to Randall Henderson. Remarks were by Harriett Allen and Elden Hughes, representing the Desert Protective Council; and by Dan Callahan, representing the Historical Society of Palm Desert.

The memorial plaque, stone on stone, through the miracle of technology, bears a striking likeness of Mr. Henderson with the inscription: **RANDALL HENDERSON "Mr. Desert" 1888-1970 Founder, Desert Protective Council**

Also etched on the plaque are several paragraphs written by Henderson for the first issue of Desert Magazine. Henderson was publisher/editor of the magazine from 1937-1958. Publication continued for another twenty-seven years under successive managements, achieving a circulation over 50,000.

Randall Henderson was a rugged mountain climber, scholarly journalist, desert explorer, crusading conservationist, gentle philosopher and revered friend. Fittingly, the plaque was "unveiled" by removing a large palm frond which shielded it. During a quarter century of exploring, quantifying and writing about the palm canyons of the desert, Henderson gained a reputation as the leading desert palm authority of his time.

Present - Pete Dangermond received the "Mountain Conservancy Award" presented by Dr. Al Muth, chairman, Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy. Dangermond's leadership in the Santa Rosa Mountains spans a career from the '70s, when he was Riverside County Parks Director, to his tenure as State Parks Director, headquartered in Sacramento, to his retirement. He has contributed and continues to give many donated hours to preservation of our mountains and natural open spaces.

Future - Jean Benson, Mayor of the City of Palm Desert, and Tim Sult, Bureau of Land Management, spoke of efforts to acquire 384 acres adjacent to the BLM Visitor Center, Santa Rosa Mountains. All speakers stressed the wonders of the out-of-doors and the importance of partnership of conservation groups, government entities and nature lovers among the citizenry. Only by joining resources and skills can the future be secured for generations to come.

LATEST ON MEMBERSHIP

Business: PFF Bank & Trust - Janet Cook, Asst. Vice President, Branch Manager
Shadow Mountain Resort & Racquet Club
Individual: Dr. Edgar De Forest
Family: Douglas W. Dutkewich

Mr. Dutkewich is a Vancouver resident who toured our facility in March. He later wrote:
"Dear Bonnie: I met you during an interlude in my walk along El Paseo. I had noticed your Society's office and had always meant to drop in for a visit. Many thanks for the information on Palm Desert's beginnings. I have been coming to the desert for over 15 years and realize now that I have been staying only two blocks from where it all began at Shadow Mountain Resort! I have shared the video with friends at home here in Vancouver and we have all found it most enjoyable and interesting. Thanks, again, for your kindness and hospitality.
Warm regards, Douglas Dutkewich"

Other out of town visitors were Roger & Tina Herrick of Bakersfield. Roger's sister, Myrna, from Iowa visited a couple of years ago. As children, they lived at the old fire station when their dad, George Andrew ("Andy" or "Tiny") Herrick, was Palm Desert's first Fire Chief from 1956 to 1966. Bob Keedy served under him as a volunteer fireman.

CYRIA HENDERSON, the late Mrs. Randall Henderson, was a talented artist and was perhaps best known locally for the bust of President Eisenhower which she sculpted in 1973. It is located on the grounds of the Palm Desert Community Presbyterian Church on Hwy. 74 where Ike and Mamie worshipped.

Randall's daughter, Evonne Riddell, has several pieces of Cyria's work. Others are in private hands in the desert area. Specifically, Evonne is seeking the whereabouts of a bas relief of several figures titled "Goodbye, Death Valley" (it is a copy; the original is in Death Valley.) Also, Evonne is looking for a bust of John Kennedy which had a damaged nose and was left with a desert friend for repair. The bust pictured here was done in 1957. It was given by Cyria to Bernice Lofland, Palm Desert's first librarian.

A BIG THANK YOU TO JEAN MARTIN
Perennial Treasurer of the Historical Society

Jean isn't sure how many years it has been -- 10 or 12? -- since she took over the books from Pat Anderson. Since reorganization of the Society, she has been elected to two 2-year terms as Treasurer and now rotates off the board, as of October '98.

Jean has lived in Palm Desert since Oct. '52. She kept books for Bob Keedy, Ed Mullins and other pioneers of the area. She is fiercely proud of the city's development, saying it has grown at a "perfect pace" and characterizes it as a "spectacular" city. She recalls the early days; in one of the failed incorporation efforts she ran for the position of City Treasurer. It was all so exciting!

We are immensely proud and appreciative of Jean. Her service in the community and on the board has been an inspiration to other board members. She recently received a plaque for business membership.

She is always upbeat. Any encounter with Jean, no matter how brief, leaves one with a smile and a little more "spring in the step." That's a rare talent! And she does have a good head for figures!

THANK YOU FOR GIFTS.....from:

- Judy Chamberlain of La Quinta = 65 issues of Palm Springs Life magazines and other periodicals.
- Alice Sjoberg & Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Smith of Arizona = a copy of Pacific Pathways - Dec. '46 and more than 250 issues of Desert Magazine from 1943-1977.

The story behind this gift: Bonnie Bowie had a call from Pat Conlon, Director of Building and Safety for the City. The Smiths were at City Hall to view some art work and asked if the city would like old issues of Desert Magazine. They had been storing them for Ms. Sjoberg who no longer wanted them. Pat said it was a great temptation on his part to keep the magazines but he called the Society office before the temptation became too great. Our very grateful "Thanks."

- Mary Safe = presented at the spring luncheon, a copy of "Forgotten Desert Artist: The Journals & Field Sketches of Carl Eytel" compiled by Dr. Roy F. Hudson, 1979.
- Caroline Berkey = info on the aviation career of A. Harold Bromley, a P.D. pioneer who died Dec. 1997.
- Memorial Gifts being received in Ted Pearson's name are deeply appreciated. Our sympathy to his wife, Eunice, and the family. Eunice is a Charter Member of our Society.

Note: Dear readers, remember that if any of you have materials about local individuals or events or objects of historical value, they would be welcome at the Society. Please share, on a loan or gift basis.

DESERT BEAUTIFUL
Thirty-six Years of High Standards

The Old Fire Station, all beautified, was a Desert Beautiful First Year Civic Award winner on May 20. The event was held at the Doubletree Resort of Palm Springs. Certificates were presented by Marian Henderson, Desert Beautiful president, and by Richard Jandt, chairman of the 1998 Civic Awards. Among the honored guests were Palm Desert's Mayor Jean Benson and Pastor Childress.

Many thanks to Roger Keezer, board member of the Historical Society, and to his wife , Maria, who were in attendance to receive the certificate. They enjoyed the buffet, the entertainment and the presentations. Slides of each place of business were shown on a large screen as names were called. (Personal happy note from Ye Editor. The Keezers met my Banjomania/Engineer son, Steve Simpson. He was there with Frank Burgess, owner of the Burgess Bldg. which also received an award. Steve designed and built the building.)

THANK-YOUS TO VOLUNTEERS cannot be said often enough. Those who are willing to lend a hand, arrange an exhibit, make an inventory, help with mailing, etc. are truly the life blood of any non-profit agency. Our Society has some stalwarts -- among them are Mary Safe, Ginny Mullins, Jeanne Ahrens, Jean Ernst, Bruce Hagerman, Roger Keezer, Doloris Driskel and others (you know who you are.) Thanks are due to Charley de Long, Manager of the Riverside County garage located in Indio.....one of Roger's recruits. At present he is working on the gear shift of Fire Engine #1 and has helped to solve other problems with the engine. He does this without charge, as a courtesy. You can't beat that kind of expertise! Thank you to Iris Herbekian for art work contributed to "The Hourglass." Her work is lovely and it adds so much.

NEW CABINET AT HEADQUARTERS

City crews have done a splendid job of transforming the old fire station. It has been completely renovated inside and out and beautifully landscaped, with public sculpture at the entry. Inside, a new cabinet is the icing on the cake. It contains books and periodicals available for public study. Two reference works are there to help researchers:

1) The Desert Magazine Subject Index
by Tom Budlong & Joan Brooks
The Arthur H. Clark Company
Spokane, Washington
1997

2) The Desert Collection Bibliography
compiled by Friends of the College of the Desert Library
In recognition of the 35th Anniversary of the founding of
College of the Desert - Fourth Edition, 1997
Millie Bird, Editor

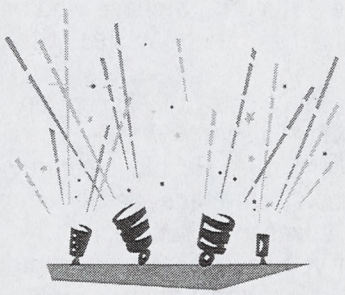
A CHANGE AT THE OFFICE

Bonnie Bowie, Office Manager, who started as a Historical Society volunteer in 1992 and then accepted a position as a part-time, paid employee is transitioning back to volunteer status. She has tendered her resignation as of June 30, to be able to work with consultant, Jan Holmlund.

Bonnie leaves the office with well established procedures and a reservoir of good will which bodes well for the future. Her efficiency and gracious helpful ways make working with her a real pleasure. We'll miss your smiling face in the office, Bonnie, but we're glad your interest continues. A world of thanks for all your efforts!

SUMMER - The office will be closed during July and August. Messages on the answering service will be monitored frequently so please call if you have a need.....phone 346-6588. Have a good Fourth and a sparkly summer.

"Hourglass" Editor,
Theda Lundquist



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